

## **Opening Statement**

### **Rep. Bart Gordon (D-TN)**

Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on Science

Hearing: *Scientific and Technical Advice for the U.S. Congress*

July 25, 2006

Mr. Chairman, thank you for scheduling a hearing on the important topic of science and technology advice to the Committee and for including Congressman Holt among the witnesses.

We appreciate your leadership on this topic and are pleased to join you in seeking better ways to incorporate the best available scientific and engineering knowledge into our legislative activities.

It was over 40 years ago that the Science Committee first addressed the topic of science advice to Congress. Democrat Mim Daddario, a charter member of our committee, and Republican Chuck Mosher coauthored the legislation that created the Office of Technology Assessment.

It was Charles Lindbergh who got Congressman Daddario focused on technology assessment. In the early 1960s, Lindbergh was concerned that the Earth was heading for disaster unless the balance between science and ecology were properly adjusted.

Lindbergh felt Congress needed specialized scientific expertise to analyze this and other tough problems. Daddario and Lindbergh continued to talk about technology assessment for several years.

During the 1960s, the Committee had many hearings and issued several reports on science advice to the Congress that paved the way for the legislation creating OTA in the early 1970s.

In the early 1970s, the legislation establishing OTA was reported unanimously by the Committee on Science. The Committee leadership then worked bipartisanly to get the bill through the House and Senate.

During its 20 years of operation, OTA created 700 reports on the science and technology behind issues of importance to Congress.

We could use a service like OTA today since relatively few Members of Congress have formal training and experience as scientists and engineers and since much of the information we receive comes from advocates selling their points of view.

In the years since OTA, we have had an increasingly difficult time of reaching consensus on a wide variety of these topics. We certainly could use in-house help in sorting through conflicting expert opinion.

I look forward to the testimony of today's experts, and to taking the first steps towards improving the way in which Congress receives and uses scientific and technical advice.